



## Use Caution When Donating This Season of Giving

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MADISON – 'Tis the season of giving, when many people open their hearts and wallets to donate to charitable causes during the holidays. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) urges consumers to do their homework before making donations, especially over the phone or internet.

“Resist high-pressure, emotional appeals,” said Sandy Chalmers, Division Administrator of Trade and Consumer Protection. “Criminals know that many people make year-end charitable contributions for tax purposes, and they will try to push you into making a quick decision to donate.”

Ask a caller to explain the purpose of the organization, what services are provided, how much of the donation goes to fundraising, whether the donation is tax-deductible, and whether you will be sent a receipt. A legitimate charity will mail you information or will point you to a website where you can find additional information.

“Be skeptical of someone who promises a sweepstakes win or free prize in exchange for a donation, or who begins by thanking you for your past donations,” said Chalmers. “Criminals often use these tactics to get you to make a quick decision.”

DATCP offers these consumer tips when making a donation this holiday:

- Do not respond to unsolicited e-mails or texts, and do not give personal information to someone who contacts you via e-mail or text.
- Donate to well-known charities that are trusted and established. Only make a donation when you initiate contact and know who you are talking to.
- Do not feel pressured to make an immediate decision over the phone.
- When online, do not click on pop-ups or links asking for donations. These often lead to a fraudulent site.
- Never write out a check or give cash to an individual solicitor. Only write checks out to the organization name or use a credit card.
- Confirm the organization soliciting donations in Wisconsin is registered with the Department of Safety and Professional Services. These organizations are required to register, and consumers can search for them online at [dsps.wi.gov](http://dsps.wi.gov).

For more information or to file a consumer complaint, visit the Bureau of Consumer Protection's website at [datcp.wisconsin.gov](http://datcp.wisconsin.gov); via e-mail at [datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov](mailto:datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov) or call toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

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